

>> BASKETBALL PREVIEW ISSUE >>

# Aggie Illustrated

## EYES ON THE PRIZE

A Bowl Game is in Sight for  
the Aggie Football Team



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### ALSO INSIDE:

Uzoma "EZ" Nwachukwu, Aggie Soccer, Shane Lechler,  
Aggie Volleyball, Tony Jerod-Eddie, The Joeckel Twins and  
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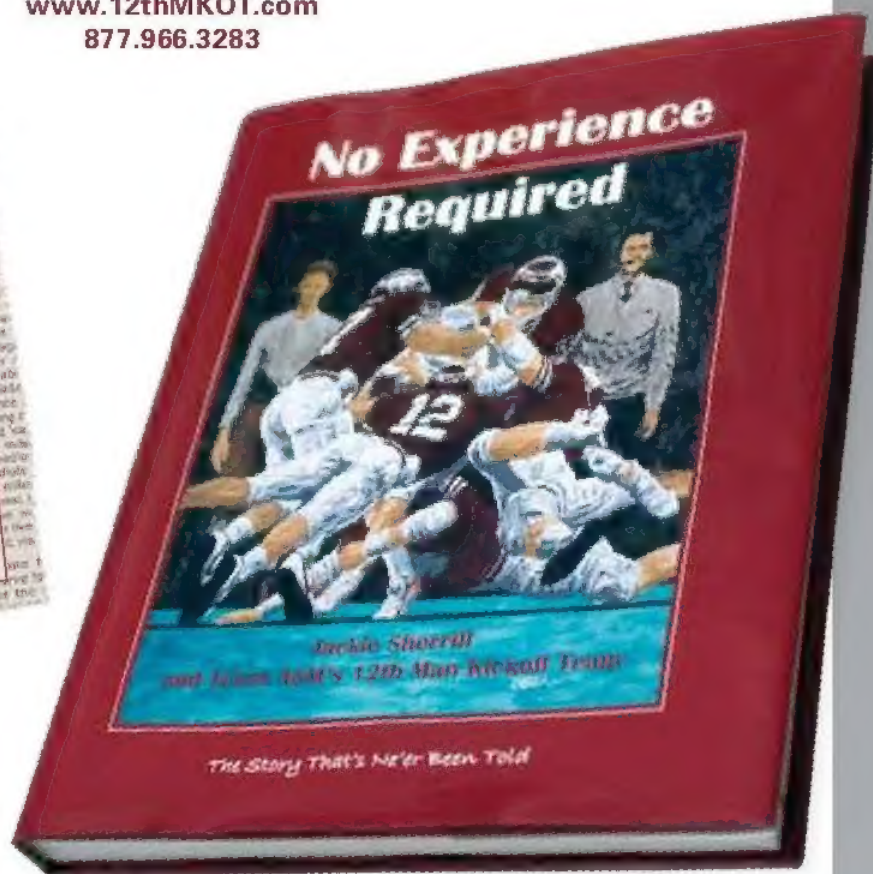
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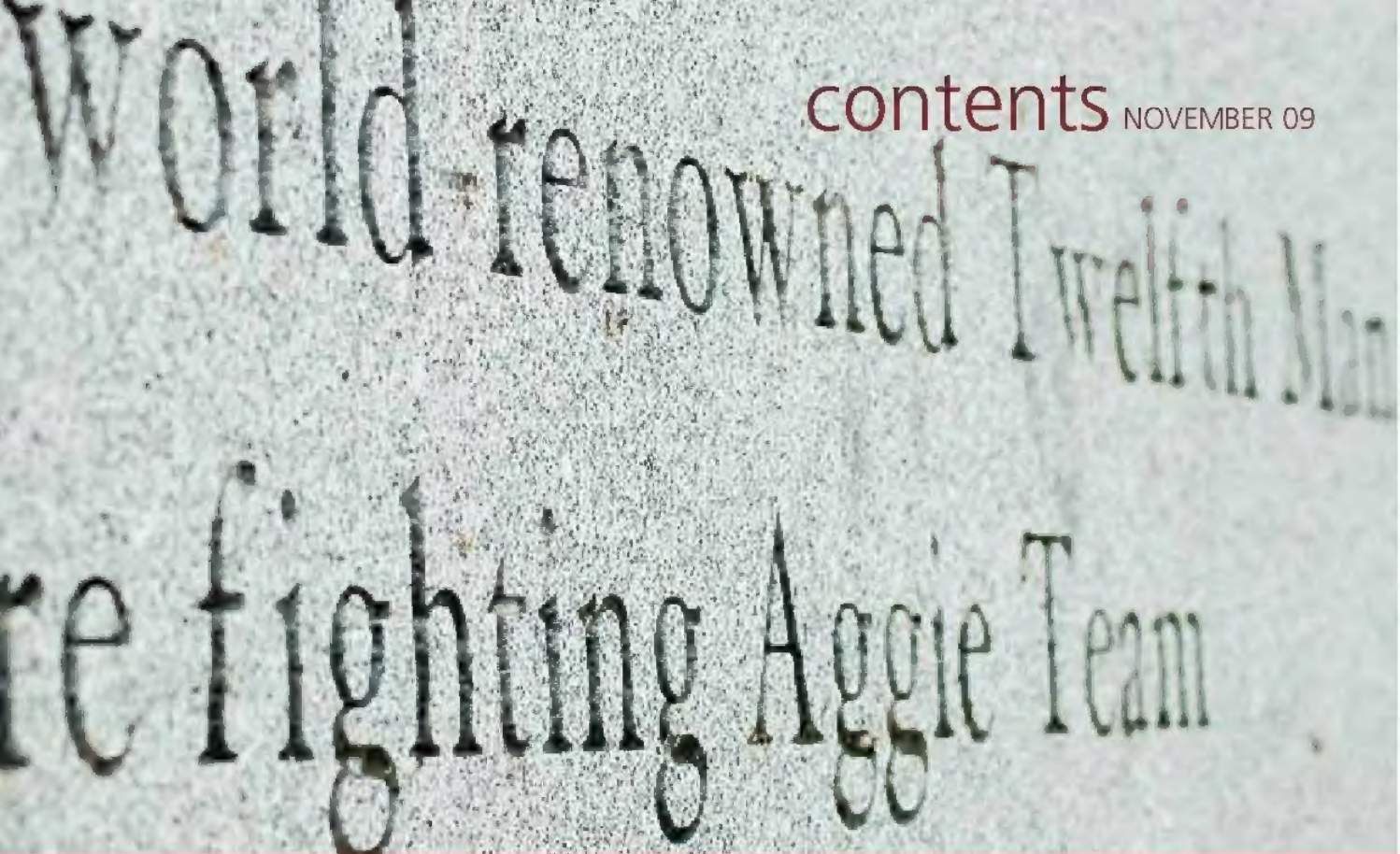
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BY BRIAN DAVIS '01 &  
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Photo by Jason McConnell '01.

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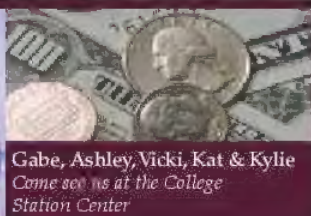
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## publisher's note

## Howdy!

Who can believe that we're already two-thirds of the way through football season? Our Ags have made great strides since last year, but it's clear that we've still got a ways to go before hoisting a Big 12 Championship on the gridiron.

Junior Jerrod Johnson has emerged as one of the most productive QBs in the nation and is on the cusp of completely re-writing the Aggie record books. And how about Von Miller? Isn't it nice to see an Aggie's name at the top of the national leaderboard for sacks? Or how about the idea of having a first-team All-American on defense? Indeed, the football program has come a long way.

As we alluded to on our cover caption, it looks like a bowl bid could be on the horizon. We don't care which one, and the opponent is irrelevant. Let's just get to a bowl and let these young players experience another month of workouts in full pads and continue to show our recruits that we're a program on the up-swing.

On another note, be sure and check out our men's and women's hoops coverage on pages 31-37. Gary Blair returns a nationally ranked squad that's as talented and hard working as any team in year's past. And you probably won't recognize Mark Turgeon's men's team. They may be a bit smaller, but the speed and athleticism they put on the court is unlike any A&M squad in decades. Make plans now to take advantage of the "holiday hoops" ticket specials and don't miss the Aggie men in action in Houston against New Mexico on December 12.

This month, Aggies all over the world remember the twelve who were lost ten years ago in the Bonfire collapse. Bonfire Remembrance Week is November 13-18 and includes a Bonfire Remembrance Program on November 17 at Reed Arena as well as a Ceremony & Candlelight Vigil at 2:42 a.m. on November 18. Read our tribute to the memory of Bonfire on page 38.

See you all at Kyle Field as the Aggies prepare to BTHO Baylor and t.u. to close out the Big 12 schedule! With any luck, the next issue to arrive in your mailbox will be the Bowl Game Preview edition.

Gig'em Ags!

*Brian '01*

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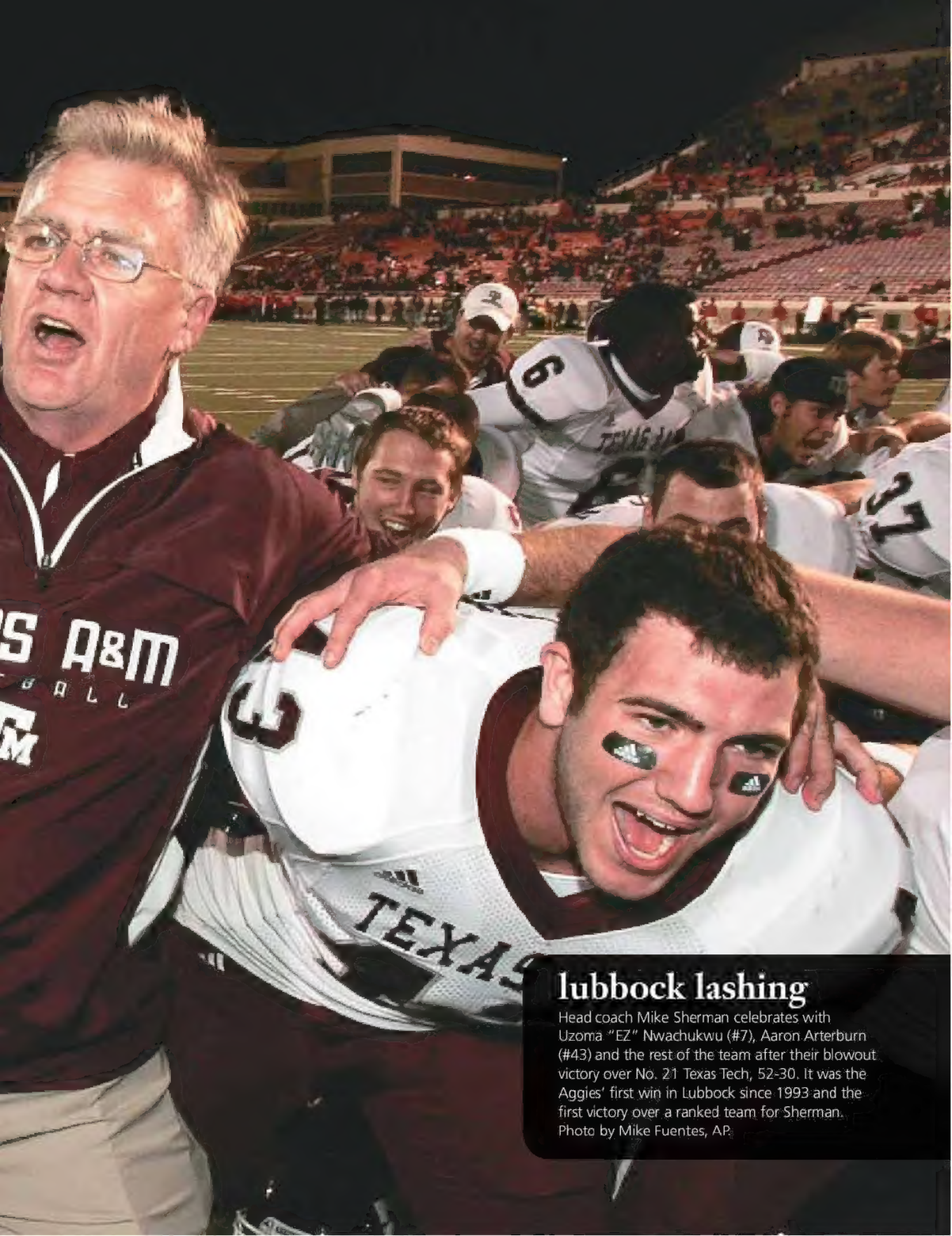
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snapshot







## **lubbock lashing**

Head coach Mike Sherman celebrates with Uzoma "EZ" Nwachukwu (#7), Aaron Arterburn (#43) and the rest of the team after their blowout victory over No. 21 Texas Tech, 52-30. It was the Aggies' first win in Lubbock since 1993 and the first victory over a ranked team for Sherman. Photo by Mike Fuentes, AP.





snapshot

## in a class of her own

The Aggie soccer team welcomes senior Emily Peterson on to the field during pre-game introductions. In October, Peterson was selected as one of ten finalists for the prestigious Lowe's Senior CLASS Award. The winner will be announced during the 2009 NCAA Women's College Cup in early December. Photo by Jason McConnell '01.







snapshot







## eyes on the ball

Sophomore Dash Harris guards a member of the Texas A&M-Commerce basketball team during an exhibition game at Reed Arena. One of the best defenders on the team, Harris will likely start at point guard for the Aggies this season, allowing senior Donald Sloan to play his more natural position (SG).  
Photo by Brian Davis '01



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# kick'em colts

BY JEREMY KSONJA '04

Luke Joeckel stands 6-6, weighs 290 pounds and is one of the most coveted offensive tackle prospects in the country. His twin brother, Matt, stands just over 6-4, weighs 220 pounds and racked up over 3,400 total yards and 38 touchdowns playing quarterback his junior year. Together, they're helping the Arlington Colts reach new heights this season.

Through the first ten games of 2009, the Colts have gone 8-2, thanks in large part to Matt's efforts through the air. Against their state-ranked district rival, Arlington Bowie, Matt posted 5A-player-of-the-week honors with his 370 yards of offense (247 passing, 123 rushing) and 6 touchdowns (4 passing, 2 rushing). Numbers like those have become the norm for Matt this season, and if the Colts can continue their winning ways, it looks like a deep playoff run is in store for Arlington.

As the promise of a state title looms, the Joeckel twins will undoubtedly be remembered for their outstanding senior seasons. According to Arlington head coach Scott Peach, however, Matt and Luke will be remembered for much more.

"The mark that they have placed on this program will last for many years to come," Peach said. "Matt and Luke have demonstrated leadership, character, work ethic and so many other intangibles that you want from your players at the highest level for high school athletes. For example, every offensive lineman in our program now strives to play like Luke. These younger kids have witnessed first hand how to approach the game, and we are much better for it."

Last May, the Joeckels committed to play football for Texas A&M, choosing the Aggies over programs such as Nebraska, Arkansas, Texas Tech and Houston. Though they never claimed to be a "package deal," it was a safe bet that the twins would choose the same destination. After all, a brother's bond is difficult to break. Plus, when you've got a good thing going, why mix it up?

In an interview with Billy Lucci at TexAgs.com, Matt said that he was excited to have his brother protecting his blind side from Big 12 defenders. According to Luke, the feeling is mutual.

"I was hoping that it would happen (playing together in college) and it was really important because we're really close," explained the nationally-ranked tackle. "I've always blocked for him and he has always been my quarterback. We've always been a good team and we've always won."

The Joeckels will be welcomed additions to the Aggie roster, and are set to graduate from high school this December in order to participate in A&M's spring drills. The extra workouts could pay huge dividends for both the twins and the Aggies, as each of their positions will present an opportunity for early playing time.



At tackle, Luke could crack the starting rotation as early as next fall with the departure of seniors Lee Grimes and Michael Shumard and lack of experience from any other player on the Aggie roster. And while Matt's opportunity probably won't arise in 2010, the quarterback race will be wide open once Jerrod Johnson exhausts his eligibility following next season.

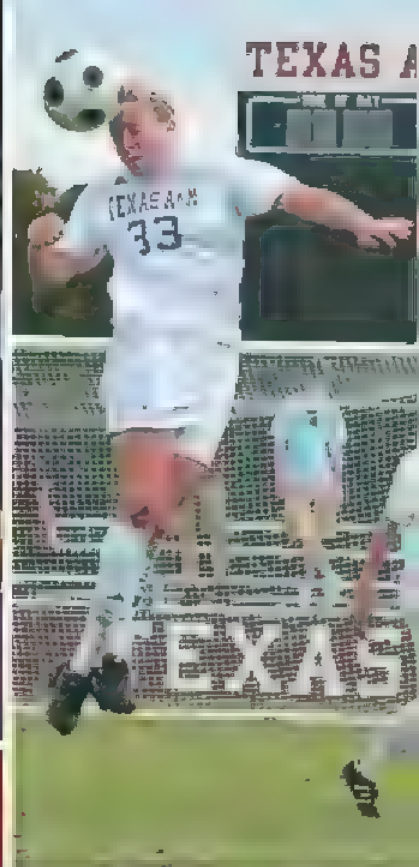
If you ask Coach Peach, the future of the Joeckel twins seems perfectly clear.

"At Texas A&M, I believe Luke will be starting at tackle next fall," he says. "I also know that Matt will be the next starting quarterback for the Aggies. I am so very proud of both of them, and I know that the sky is the limit for their futures. Kick'em Colts." ■





Despite playing without several key players due to injuries, the Aggie soccer team enjoyed some great success on the field during Big 12 play. Unfortunately, the Ags finished one win short of regular season conference champion, Missouri, and one goal short in the Big 12 Tournament final against Oklahoma State. A&M secured its 35th consecutive bid to the NCAA Tournament, but will make the trip to Baton Rouge, La., for the opening rounds.





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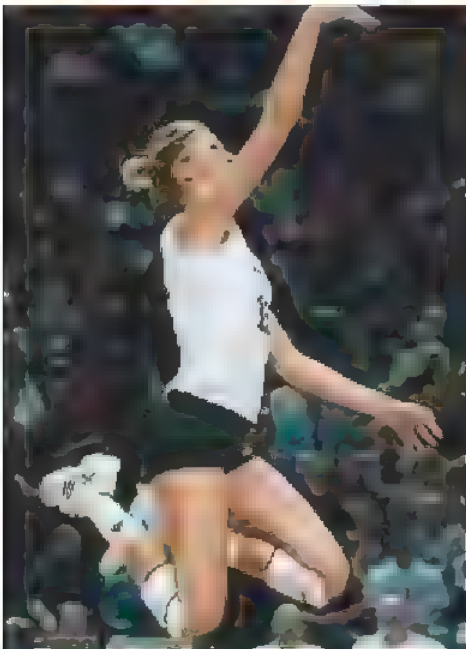
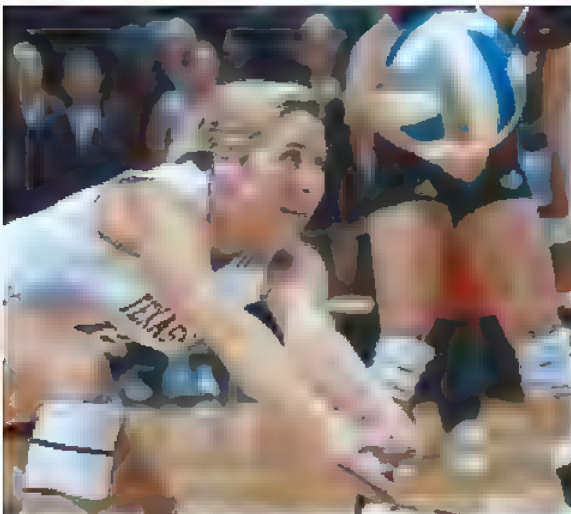
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Heading into the home stretch of the Big 12 schedule, the once-ranked Texas A&M volleyball team has log a few heartbreakers and is sitting in the middle of the conference standings with some tough opponents ahead. The Aggies will have their eyes on the prize – advancing to the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2004 – but will need to finish strong in order to improve their chances with the selection committee.



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22  @Houston W Invitational All Day  NCAA's TBA  @Auburn 2 pm  Texas Tech 3 pm	23  @NCAA Champs. 10 am		25  @Colorado 8 pm	26  Clemson 76 Classic 3:30 pm  t.u. 7 pm	27  TBD 76 Classic TBA  NCAA's TBA	28  TBD 76 Classic TBA  NCAA's TBA  Missouri 4 pm
29  NCAA's TBA	30		 SFA 6 pm W  Prairie View A&M 8 pm m	 NCAA's TBA	 College Cup TBA  NCAA's TBA  Akron 7 pm m	 College Cup TBA  NCAA's TBA  @Rice TBA W  Southern Illinois Carleers Classic TBA
 College Cup TBA  NCAA's TBA  TBD (Co-ops) W Classic TBA	 North Texas m 7 pm	 North Texas W 7 pm	 NCAA's TBA		 NCAA's TBA  Reveille Invitational 4 pm  New Mexico (Houston) 5 pm m  @TCU 6 pm W	



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# WHERE ARE THEY NOW? SHANE LECHLER BY STEVE HUNT

Ask any pro football fan who they consider to be the top punter in the NFL and nine times out of ten, the answer will be former Texas A&M All-American Shane Lechler. In fact, by the time the four-time Pro Bowler hangs up his cleats, he could be regarded as one of the best in NFL history.

Lechler arrived in Aggeland in 1996 after a standout career at East Bernard HS where he starred at quarterback, punter and kicker. He came to A&M as a quarterback, but some sage advice from then-head coach R.C. Slocum changed his football career and his life forever.

"Coach Slocum really got me to where I am now," Lechler said. "I was wrapped up with still trying to play quarterback. I was mad I wasn't getting to compete for the job. He finally sat me down and told me that if I just concentrated on punting, that could work out for me for a long time and it has. He was very instrumental in my career at college and now in the NFL. He was a great mentor and a great person for me to have there as a coach."

In his first season in maroon and white, Lechler earned Freshman All-American honors after averaging a freshman record 42.7 yards per punt. His sophomore season was even more amazing as he earned All-Big 12 honors and broke records with a 47-yard average. After a standout junior and senior season, Lechler etched his name in the NCAA record books for career punt average (44.7), earning All-American and All-Big 12 honors along the way.

In the 2000 NFL Draft, Lechler was selected in the fifth round by the Oakland Raiders and immediately became the team's starting punter and one of the best in professional football. Nine years later, he holds numerous league and team records and has played on the biggest stage.

"It's been fun," he said. "I've had a lot of success. I've been to four Pro Bowls. I've played in the Super Bowl and have been in the AFC Championship Game twice. It's really flying by. I feel like this should only be year four or five."

Part of his positive experience with the

Raiders has been playing for often-maligned owner Al Davis.

"Al is unique," he admits. "He's a very fiercely competitive person. He just wants to win and he'll do whatever it takes to win. People seem to be judging him a lot without knowing him. That's where he's gotten a bad rap here or there. As far as an owner, he's outstanding. He'll do anything for his players to put us in the right position to win football games."

Speaking of Davis, the Raider owner gave his standout punter a nice surprise in February 2009 with a four-year, \$16-million contract, making Lechler the highest-paid punter in league history.

"It meant a lot to me," he said. "It was just one of those deals I got blindsided by. I was ready to go into free agency and see what was going to happen there. Then, when Al called, it was pretty much a done deal. I never thought I'd see those kinds of numbers. It was a no-brainer."

Another part of being a Raider is playing his home games in front of arguably the most rabid group of fans in the NFL the Black Hole.

"It's a totally different deal than what we had in college," he admits. "A&M fans have a lot of class and respect for the other team involved at Kyle Field. With our fans out here in Oakland in the Black Hole, it's like Halloween every Sunday night. You never know what you're go-

ing to see or what's going to happen. You have to go out and roll with the punches. The unique thing about it is that the Raider fans travel as well as Aggie fans. There are Raider fans all over the country."

Even though he lives pretty far from Aggeland, Lechler's ties to his alma mater still run deep, especially since he married a former A&M volleyball player, Enn Gibson.

"I met Erin while she was in college playing volleyball," he said. "We've now been married for eight years and have two kids. She's a sports fan just like I am and understands what I go through on a day-to-day basis. It's really been a great deal."

And like many Aggies who still keep tabs on the football program, he likes where things are headed under Mike Sherman.

"Mike is a good guy," Lechler said. "He's a no-nonsense person, which is what I think they needed after what they went through. I really respect him. I was able to play while he was there for a little while before he went to Green Bay. He's a great coach and a good teacher of football. That's probably the best way I can put it - he teaches the game the right way. He's going to be a good one there. He's going to get that thing turned around. Hopefully he keeps the ball rolling." ■





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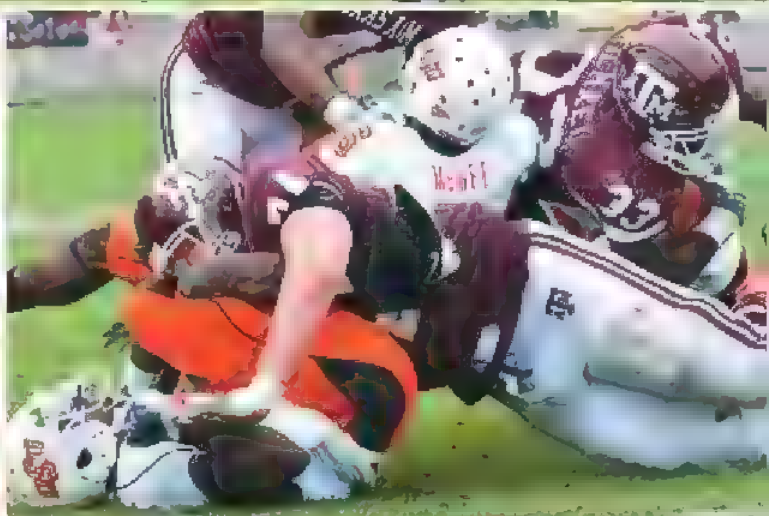
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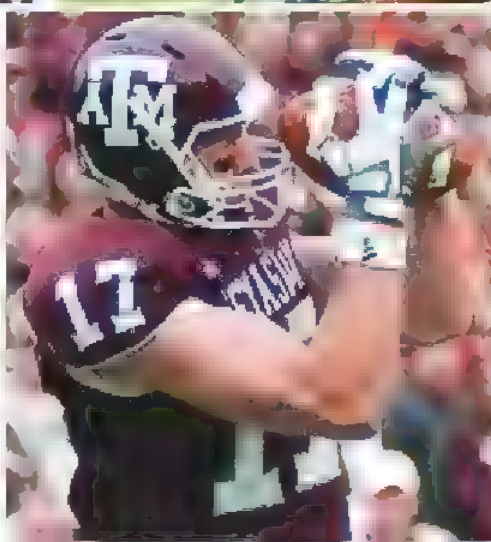




(left) Freshman LB Jonathan Stewart upends Oklahoma State wide receiver Dameron Fooks in the second half of the Aggies' game against the Cowboys. Stewart finished the game with five tackles (above) Senior OT Lee Grimes clears the way for freshman RB Christine Michael's touchdown run, giving A&M a 22-21 lead with five minutes left in the 3rd quarter (top) Junior JACK Von Miller (#40) and the Aggie defense eyes OSU QB Zac Robinson and the Cowboy offense

## FOOTBALL REWIND

A look back at recent football games and Q&As with freshman Uzoma "EZ" Nwachukwu and sophomore Tony Jerod-Eddie BY BRIAN DAVIS '01



(right) Sophomore WR/QB Ryan Tannehill makes the leaping grab to pick up the first down against Oklahoma State. Tannehill finished the game with 3 catches for 41 yards. (above) Freshman RB Christine Michael stiff arms a defender on a run during the Aggs 36-31 loss to the Cowboys. (top) A&M defenders slam OSU QB Zac Robinson into the turf during the first half. (facing page) Freshman WR Uzoma "EZ" Nwachukwu catches the ball over defender Jamar Wall in the second quarter of the Texas Tech game. Nwachukwu finished with a team-high 4 catches for 79 yards in the Aggies' 52-30 victory over the Red Raiders.



## uzoma "ez" NWACHUKWU

Ten questions for the freshman wide receiver

**What's the history and meaning of your name?**

It's of Nigerian descent. It's Ebo. My first name, Uzoma, means "the road is good," and my last name, Nwachukwu, means "child of God."

**How does that apply to football?**

It's motivating because I feel like God has a plan for me, the road is going to be good and everything is going to work out.

**When did people start calling you "EZ"?**

I'm not sure. It was during 7th grade football. The coaches started calling me that and it just stuck with me.

**Why did you choose to come to Texas A&M?**

I think Coach Sherman definitely sold the program to me. He wanted to pass more and he needed the receivers to do it. Everything just felt right coming here.

**What's your relationship like with Jerrod Johnson off the field, because it always seems like you're seeing eye to eye on the field?**

Jerrod is a cool guy. We share a lot of the same interests and things I like that. We joke around a lot. I think we have pretty good chemistry on and off the field. He's just a fun guy to play with.

**We heard you are a good musician and singer. When did you get into that?**

I started playing the guitar when I was six and started singing when I was in 7th grade and just kept with it.

**What's your favorite song to play on the guitar?**

"Follow Through" by Gavin DeGraw.

**We've heard that the team likes to sing "Lean on Me" together. Are you the lead singer for that?**

I get into that song because that's my song. I love it. I get into a real rhythm and get the guys going with it.

**Jerrod and Christine Michael are pretty good singers too. How do you compare to those guys?**

I'm not going to lie to you, they both can sing pretty well. They might have to have a sing-off.

**How exciting was it to come here with your Allen HS teammate Steven Terrell and how have you helped each other this year?**

That was another good selling point. Everything clicked. He is my best friend and we both bought into the system together. It's great coming here with a friend because you have someone to lean on that has known you for a while. It is awesome. **EW**







# tony JEROD-EDDIE

Fourteen questions for the sophomore defensive tackle

## What is the story behind your last name?

I was originally Tony Jerrod when I came to Texas A&M. My dad wanted me to have his last name (Eddie), so I set down with him and my mom and we talked about it. I said if that was going to happen, I wasn't going to take the other name off. So we decided to hyphenate it.

## Speaking of Eddie, how would you describe your relationship with Eddie Brown?

We are really close. He is my brother from another mother. We have that bond and we are always together. There was just something that made us click from day one at A&M. Then there's the name similarity.

## Do you have a favorite move when you're trying to beat an offensive lineman?

It's not really a move, but I guess bull rushing is my favorite. Coach Wyatt is always getting on me about bull rushing too much. He tells me, "Don't run down the middle of the guy, don't run down the middle of the guy." But for some reason, I don't know why, but I always bull rush. I bull rush and then I try to work a move in.

## Do you have a favorite formation or play that you run on defense?

We ran a formation against Kansas State called "mix" to try to take advantage of the pass protection of their guards. Von Miller and Matt Moss played defensive tackle while me and Lucas or Eddie—whoever was in—played defensive end. It was like going back to the high school days so enjoyed that. My favorite play would have to be "twist." The strong side tackle penetrates while I distract the line. I make it seem like I'm coming and then while the other tackle is pushing, I wrap around. Most of the time it works really well and I come around free.

## How does it feel when you beat an offensive lineman or blow up a play?

It's just like winning a game because every time you go against an offensive lineman, it's like a game within the game. You have 70 games with in the game and you try to win them. Obviously you're not going to win all of them, but as a defensive lineman, if you win the majority of them, then the team is likely to win most of the time. Usually if the defensive line is good, then the team is good. It's a great feeling when you get the best of them. You're out there talking and competing and it's real down there in the trenches. When you get the best of an offensive lineman, it always feels good.

## How special is it to get to play with so many of your former DeSoto HS teammates?

It's great because I grew up with these guys. We have a different kind of bond—a brotherhood. It's great every time I see Von Miller get a sack or Cyrus Gray score a touchdown or Garrick Williams make a play like the interception against Texas Tech. It's great to play with them. I love those guys.

## Why did you decide to come to Texas A&M?

Von was an amazing factor in my decision to come here. We lived together back home and we still live together at A&M. I used to come to the games with him all the time when he was getting recruited. Everything about the Aggies got me hooked. We came and did the Spirit of Aggie and and it was crazy. I had never really taken A&M into consideration, but as I came out here I just fell in love with it—the family atmosphere, the Aggie connection and everything. I just love being an Aggie.

## When did you start playing football?

I started playing football when I was about nine years old. That was my first pee-wee football experience. I didn't play flag. I had to play with the

(above) Jun or QB Jerrod Johnson hands off to sophomore RB Cyrus Gray against Iowa State. Johnson accounted for four touchdowns and threw for 234 yards on 23-of-28 passing, while Gray rushed for 119 yards on 21 carries—his second straight 100-yard game—leading the Aggies to a 35-10 victory (facing page, top) Senior DB Jordan Pugh flies over Iowa State's Collin Franklin after intercepting QB Jerome Tiller's first-quarter pass. Pugh had one of his best games in an Aggie uniform, finishing with a team-high 12 tackles and the interception—the second of his career (facing page, bottom) Senior TE Jamie McCoy runs down the sideline in the fourth quarter of the Iowa State game for a 38-yard gain





12 and 13 year olds because I was overweight and couldn't play with my own age group. In my first game I fractured my knee.

#### What is your nickname?

"Sug" is not because I'm slow. It's just a nickname that my little brother gave me and then my friends started calling me that. When I got here only Carrick, Cyrus and von called me "Sug" but now everybody calls me that. It's funny when Coach Sherman calls me that.

#### What do you like to do for fun outside of football?

I like to play basketball. I'm a big basketball fan. We've been playing basketball a lot of my life. I played in high school and played A&M basketball. I was on an intramural team with some of my other teammates and we did pretty well.

#### When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A football or basketball player. I have pictures of myself holding a football and the ball was almost bigger than me. Same thing with basketball.


#### Do you have any hidden talents?

I can rap a little bit. I rapped in high school and made a song. Now it's a cover on YouTube. Some of my teammates have it on their iPods.

#### What's the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?

I would buy my grandmomma a house. Love my grandmomma.

#### What do you want to have accomplished when your time at Texas A&M is over?

I want to be a part of bringing back the Wrecking Crew. I watch those old tapes of those guys and how they played and they played lights out. That's a bold statement because we have a lot of work to do, but if we keep doing things the way we are doing them, then we have a chance. 



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## Getting to know assistant coach Vic Schaefer and the 2009-10 women's basketball team

BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

### When you graduated from A&M, did you ever imagine coming back to coach here?

Well, I think you do imagine coming back to coach here, but I never thought in 1984 that I would come back and be a women's coach. I didn't actually coach women's basketball until 1990. Back then, certainly that was a dream, but I was awfully young and green like any other new graduate. When I left here in December 1984, I didn't have a job. The public school system doesn't hire people in December. I didn't get a job until August before school started. It was typical. I went all summer without a job offer and then three to four weeks before school started I had four job offers. I ended up taking the least paying job because it allowed me to be at the high school level instead of having to be a junior high coach. That's how I ended up in Midway, which was a blessing. I think anyone who graduates from a school and breeds their colors as I breed maroon would have the same goal.

### Did Coach Blair have a hard time convincing you to come with him from Arkansas?

Actually, when he was leaving Arkansas to come here, I was going to be the new head coach at New Mexico State. It's a long story, but the bottom line was at the end of the day I was able to come back to Texas A&M. My mother lived in Houston at the time and her health was failing. I felt like if I went to Las Cruces, New Mexico that she may never see her grandkids again. At that time, they were 8 years old and that was important to my wife and I. And I'm proud to say that I've always been a momma's boy. As it turned out, my mother passed away a year and a half later. Obviously have no regrets about coming to Texas A&M because of what we've been able to accomplish in basketball, but I'm even more blessed that this opportunity came up and allowed me to be close to my mother that last year and a half of her life.

### Are you hungry for another opportunity to be a head coach?

Sure. I hope to get that opportunity one more time. When I left Sam Houston State in 1997, Coach Blair and I agreed that going to Arkansas with

him would give me a better opportunity than staying where I was at that time. That was one of the biggest reasons why I went with him. So, I do have that ambition, but until that happens I'm in a great place.

### How much of a challenge is it to replace the senior leadership you lost from last year's team?

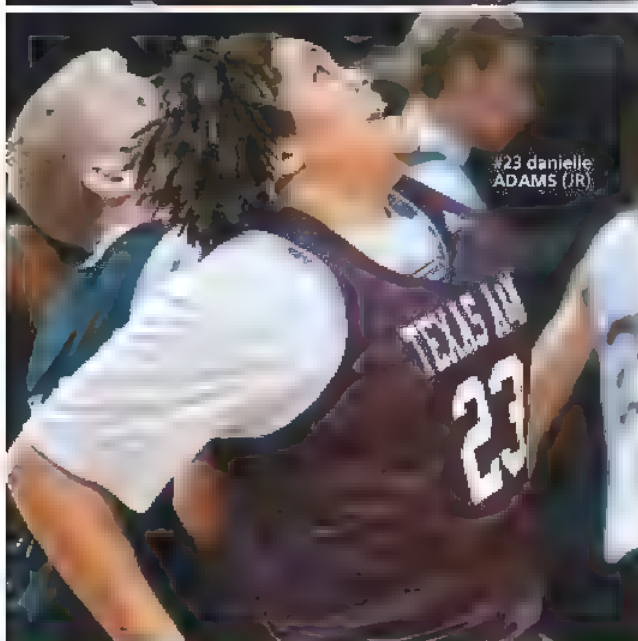
Anytime you lose three four-year starters, that's a big hole to fill. That's about 135 victories that graduated. But we have some kids that have been here and played off and on and it's time for them to step up. We've got a top ten recruiting class coming in and that's why we recruited those kids. They will have an opportunity to play. How hard is it going to be? I can't answer that today, but we have some kids that are working really hard and we have a lot of confidence in our team.

### What returning players do you expect to step up and become a bigger part of the team this year?

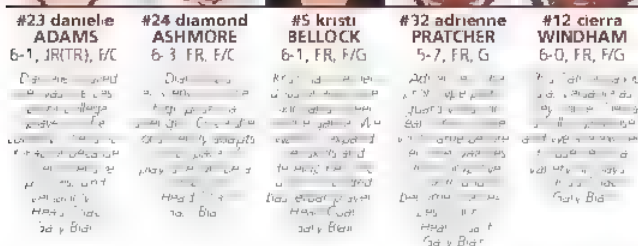
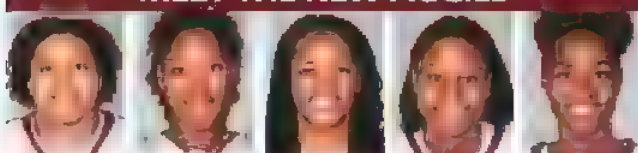
I think Damitra Buchanan is our most improved player and she has been doing a wonderful job in practice. She's doing a fairly good job in leadership. I think anytime you have a returning point guard that is a very important piece to the puzzle and obviously we have one in Sydney Colson. Sydney Carter and Colson bring a lot of intangibles to the game. It's more than just X's and O's and baskets and defense that they bring. Those two kids along with Damitra are really important and obviously Tanisha Smith who had a tremendous February and March for us and was Big 12 Newcomer of the Year last season after transferring from junior college. Those are four players who have really stepped up early on for us.

### They call you the Secretary of Defense. How have you built this team into such a force on defense?

I really just think it's the foundation that we laid from day one. I think it's the fundamentals that we teach day in, day out. I think it's having some selfless kids who are committed to being the best team they can be and being a good defensive team. I think it's that combination of selflessness, being trustworthy to your teammates and the fact that it's what we work



## MEET THE NEW AGGIES



on every day. Defense is not complicated. I think a lot of times people try to overcomplicate it with 5, 6, or even 10 different looks that they have. We've been pretty solid playing good half-court man, we will press you in man and we have a really good match-up zone that we play that has a lot of man principles. Our zone is not that much different than man. So we're teaching the same things day in, day out. If you want to know what the secret is, it's that we are creating habits. And they're good habits.

Who do you expect to be your defensive MVP?

I think we have some good cards out there. We have Damitra who has a tremendous understanding of her role as a post player and help defender. There's Sydney Carter who is the hardest nose kid on our team and would step in front of a freight train to take a charge. She has maybe the best feet of any kid I've ever coached. Tanisha is really long and then Colson has the quickest hands of any player I've ever coached. Each of those kids have intangibles and you're hopeful that you can put all those things together and add some other players to that chemistry that will help you continue to be as good as you've been. The problem for us is that we are going to end up playing some new kids who haven't played much. So we're going to have some growing pains and we're going to be different. I keep saying that. I think we can be different in a good way, but there will be some growing pains with this group early on.

**What do you like most about being a coach?**

The relationships I have with my players. I wouldn't trade them for anything. I look back over the years at some of the kids who I've had the privilege of coaching, the relationships, I still have with them and the pride I get from seeing them be successful. I'm dating myself, but now I have former players with kids and even have a former player who has a kid that is a player. When you've done it as long as I have, 24 years, that's going to come around. But I just enjoy the relationship I have with my players and appreciate their efforts. I get so much gratification from sitting there and watching our team frustrate another team defensively. To me that's what it's all about. When the lights come on and they are out there and the other team can't get into their offense, can't make a pass and is turning it over to us. Like we did against Oklahoma last year on Big Monday on national TV. We're down 14 points and all of a sudden boom, boom, boom. We're stealing it, laying it in, stealing it, laying it in, stealing it, laying it in. There's a lot of gratification in that as a coach. And seeing your kids excited about doing that is very special. You can watch a lot of basketball on TV and you just don't see that very often. With our kids, you can just see their faces light up. There's a time in a game when you can see that our kids know they've got them. We're on to what they're trying to do and they won't be able to do it.

**What are your thoughts on the other coaches on this staff and their impact on the players?**

We talk about chemistry in the locker room with the players, but I've always said that I think we have tremendous chemistry on our coaching staff. We have a caring staff and all love our players and, I think they recognize that. I think all our coaches have strengths that we're able to use as individuals and as a group. Coach Blair allows us all to work and I think that's very important. He trusts us and we have been with him a long time. I'm going on year 13, Coach Bond is going on year 9 or 10 and we've known Coach Harris for a long time. We are a family. We have a tremendous passion for what we are doing. I think if you asked our players, first and foremost, they would say that we care about them deeply. I think that chemistry factor really plays a big part in the success of our program.

**What are your expectations for this team this season?**

Our expectations are no different than for any other team. We've said all along that we're reloading. We've reloaded with a tremendous recruiting class and we have nine players back from what has been an Elite Eight/Sweet Sixteen group. I think if you ask any of those nine, they would say they were disappointed in losing in the Sweet 16 last year. For whatever reason we did not play well that night and Arizona State did. That being said, we're after another Big 12 Championship this season and we want another 12 seed in the NCAA Tournament. We've been fortunate to accomplish that 2 seed two years in a row now. There is a bunch of work in front of us to attain those goals, but I don't think any of us are thinking anything different than that. I feel like we have the capability to win a Big 12 Championship and if you do that, you've earned a great seed in the NCAA Tournament because this league is loaded with great coaches, great assistant coaches and great players. **ATL**





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Nov 13	Angelo State
Nov 20	Samford
Dec 2	Prairie View A&M
Dec 4	Akron
Dec 7	North Texas
Dec 19	The Citadel
Jan 2	Northwestern State
Jan 5	North Dakota
Jan 8	Nebraska 
Jan 19	Oklahoma 
Jan 23	Colorado 
Jan 30	Texas Tech 
Feb 6	Baylor 
Feb 15	Kansas 
Feb 2	Texas  <small>State Fair Live Star Showdown</small>
Mar 3	Oklahoma State 

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Nov 15	Duke
Nov 18	Rice
Dec 2	Stephen F. Austin
Dec 8	North Texas
Dec 28	Prairie View A&M
Jan 4	Lamar
Jan 13	Iowa State 
Jan 23	Texas Tech 
Jan 31	Oklahoma State 
Feb 3	Missouri 
Feb 13	Kansas State 
Feb 20	Texas  <small>State Fair Live Star Showdown</small>
Feb 22	Baylor 
Mar 2	Oklahoma 

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Seniors Derrick Roland, Bryan Davis and Donald Sloan want to leave as the winningest players in Texas A&M basketball history

BY BRAN DAVIS '01 & JASON MCCONNELL '01



**How does it feel to be going into your final year in maroon and white?**

**BD:** It feels really good knowing we've come so far from our freshman year.

**D-Ro:** I'm excited but also a little nervous because we know after the season we will all be going different places.

**Sloan:** Seems like we were freshman just a week ago. At the same time, we are the final year the seniors on the team and it didn't seem like it would ever happen. It's here and I want to soak it all up.

**What would make this season a success in your mind?**

**D-Ro:** We want to go out as the three most winningest players in A&M history and win a Big 12 Championship.

**Sloan:** I'd say the same thing. Win a Big 12 Championship, conference tournament or the whole thing. NCAA tournament. Either one of those would be really good.

**How about all of them?**

**BD:** That would be really good.

**Sloan:** Perfect.

**Take us through a typical day in the offseason for an Aggie basketball player.**

**BD:** Wake up at 5 a.m. Do some running on the indoor track. Shower. Go to two classes. Hit the weights. Back to another class. Go to study hall for a little bit. Then it's time for individual studies. After that, back to study hall. Get home about 9:30 or 10 p.m. Then play video games.

**Sloan:** That's a typical day, not an extreme day.

**What's an extreme day?**

**Sloan:** If you have a test or something the next

day, who knows when you will get home. Could be midnight or later.

**BD:** Leave home at 5 a.m., get home at 11 p.m. or later.

**Who has improved the most in the offseason?**

**D-Ro:** David Loubeau.

**Sloan:** I think everyone has done what they needed to do over the summer to improve their game, so I don't think there's just one who has improved the most. I can go individually through each player and say what he has changed or improved on to help the team be better.

**What's your favorite thing about the new basketball facilities?**

**Sloan:** The exits [laughing].

**D-Ro:** The hot tub and cold tub.

**BD:** I like the underwater treadmill.

**Sloan:** I would say the film room. People put a lot of money into these facilities and we're very thankful. We try to take advantage of everything available to us while we are here.

**Who is going to be the breakout/most surprising player on this year's team?**

**BD:** I think probably Loubeau, or maybe one of the freshmen will step up and shock some people.

**Tell us about each of the freshmen. What do you expect from each of them this year?**

**BD:** We're expecting them to come in and go hard, do whatever they can do to help us win and play their role. That's basically what our team is about. Everyone has to play their specific role to help us win games.



**As seniors, what have you learned that you are teaching the freshmen?**

**BD:** We're trying to teach things like rotating on defense and other little things like that to help the team out.

**Sloan:** We're trying to pull them along because it's not as easy as they probably thought it was going to be. We have embraced them and are letting them know that we are going to need them to step up and dive on the floor for loose balls, take charges and things like that to help us win. I think they are buying into it.

**Most outside the program were surprised to see Junior Elonu leave early for the NBA. Were you guys surprised at all?**

**D-Ro:** No, not really. Everyone got the vibe of who wanted to come back and be here and who didn't. We really weren't getting the vibe that he wanted to come back. So we prepared for it all offseason, other people stepped up and we took it in stride.

**Who is the most underrated player on the team?**

**All:** Derrek Lewis

**BD:** He hasn't had many opportunities in games, but if you ask anyone who comes to practice, you will hear his name. He works really hard.

**Are you looking forward to spending Thanksgiving in California this year?**

**D-Ro:** Yes, hopefully it will be better than Padre

**BD:** I'm looking forward to it. I'm going to see some family out there.

**Sloan:** We're hoping Dash's mom will cook something for us and bring it to the hotel.

Is she a good cook?

**Sloan:** don't know [laughing] We haven't had her cooking before. Hopefully she wants to cook for us.

**BD:** We're tired of having hotel food for Thanksgiving. Two years ago in New York we had pizza for Thanksgiving. Last year in Prague we had shrimp. Not what you typically eat for Thanksgiving.

**So you would like to have a real Thanksgiving meal then?**

**BD:** Yes! We haven't had one in about four years.

**How about a potential rematch with UCLA while you are there?**

**BD:** I would love it. Right back in Anaheim.

**Sloan:** If we take care of business then we will be playing them. That's a game that I think we would all be fired up for. It probably wouldn't mean as much to the freshmen, but they know what happened.

**D-Ro:** I know it would mean a lot to me and the freshmen would be fired up for us.

**What's your favorite thing about being an Aggie basketball player?**

**BD:** The support we get

**Sloan:** Yeah, our fan base is amazing. Even if we go through a losing streak, the fans are still there to support us. It's the Aggie way.

**How do you want to be remembered when your Aggie career is over?**

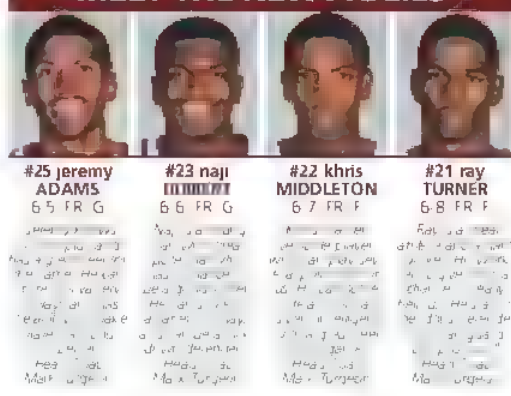
**BD:** Like D-Ro said, the three most winningest players in A&M history.

**D-Ro:** A winner. That we just played as a team, were successful and nobody worried about personal goals.

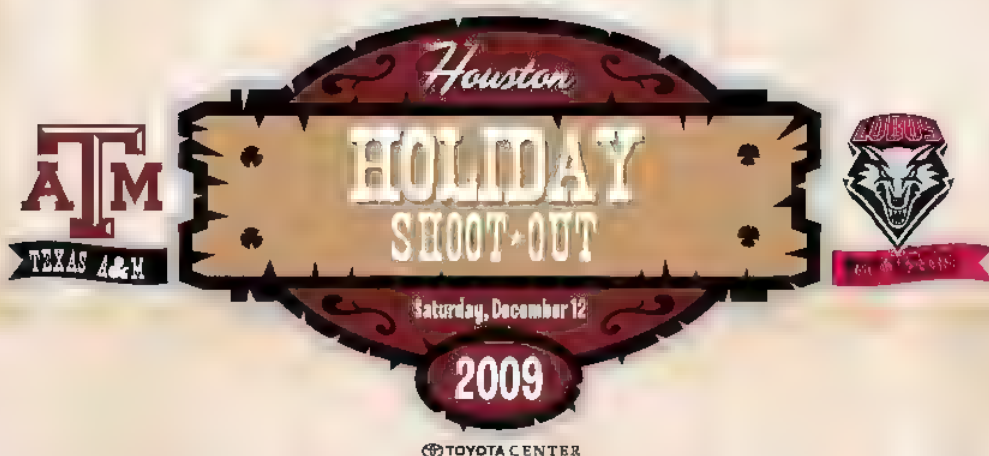
**Sloan:** I'd like for us to be known as the three guys that got us past the Sweet 16. And hopefully further.

**BD:** If we go out as the three winningest players, it will be a perfect ending. **AS**

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ALAN KITCHINGS  
FIGHTIN' TEXAS AGGIE  
CLASS OF 1998

# IN LOVING MEMORY OF AGGIE BONFIRE

THE COMMITTEE

The emotion of the article is inescapable. A torrential downpour of memories and the confounding combination of utter thrill and tragic loss leave me literally covered in chill bumps. How does one begin to explain the dichotomy of a tradition that embodies both The Aggie Family's finest hour and its worst nightmare?

On November 18, 1999 at 2:22 am, Aggie Bonfire collapsed just eight days shy of its annual engagement to light up the College Station sky. Twelve students and staff were killed in the accident, and 27 were injured. Over the ensuing days, a national media frenzy ensued. Texas A&M University media relations staff fielded countless questions about the integrity of the Bonfire design and the enforcement of safety regulations at the time. Students and faculty struggled to maintain the fragility of a fully functioning academic environment, all the while haunted by the emptiness of dormitory seats once occupied by victims of the tragedy. In time, family members of the deceased had returned

begin to file lawsuits, one by one, against the university.

The decision-makers eventually passed down the unthinkable, but only reasonable solution: Aggie Bonfire would be suspended, indefinitely. Although not technically a living and breathing being, for many of us, Aggie Bonfire also died that fateful night.

As I was considering what exactly to write in this story, I called my sister to pick her brain a little bit. We spoke about old times and fond memories of Texas A&M. Suddenly, without provocation, she made a statement that quickly became the foundation of this article.

"People have forgotten that, before Aggie Bonfire was a tragedy, it was really something great."

You're right, Les. It was. It was really something great.

Therefore, with the utmost respect for those lives lost in the 1999 Bonfire collapse, and to honor that which they were each so passionate about, this article is dedicated to Aggie Bonfire.

In loving memory.

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We remember. 11.18.99





**Dr. Andy Hansen**  
*Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of 1971*

I remember growing a Bonfire beard. The freshmen all had to chew tobacco and I hated tobacco. So we went out and bought a bunch of Tootsie Roll pops because the spit looked the same. Inevitably, at one point we ran out, and some upperclassmen made us chew some Red Man and there were several who got sick. Luckily I wasn't one of them.

In those days, the freshmen and sophomores would haul logs. The juniors got to cut some and the seniors got to use an ax. *I couldn't wait to be a senior and be out there cutting like everybody else with my ax.*

It was a lot of fun and it was amazing. We would always play an away game the week or two before. I'll never forget staying on campus during those away games and building Bonfire.

**Bucky Richardson**  
*Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of 1991*

The first time I attended Bonfire was in 1987. I can remember walking up as a team from Cain Hall to the Bonfire site on campus. I remember arriving and walking up on stage, looking out at 50,000 people. It was a very overwhelming experience. I could not believe all these people were there to support the team and the Aggies as we were getting ready to play against Texas.

Bonfire symbolizes camaraderie – love and unity for each other and your school. ***Bonfire is what we are, who we are, and what we are about.*** It's my favorite tradition at A&M.

The Bonfire collapse was a tragic day for A&M. We will always remember those who lost their lives. Someday, somehow, somehow, we need to bring it back to the Aggies. We should bring it back to honor their memory.

**Tim Duffy**  
*Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of 1998*

When you're an underclassman, you don't really understand what Bonfire is about. You build it because you are told you're supposed to. You cut and you load. You do as you're told. Stack all night, and test at 8.

As an upperclassman, you begin to understand that Bonfire is about something bigger than you. This is where you meet your friends. It's the only time when tensions between the Northside and corps dorms are cast aside for a common mission. ***It's all about coming together as Aggies and building something great.***

As head yell leader at Aggie Bonfire '97, I was humbled to be there on stage and humbled to be part of such an awesome tradition. Looking out from the stage, the thousands of people faded into the darkness. I couldn't see them all, but I knew they were there.



*"We always say that Bonfire symbolized the Aggies' burning desire to beat the hell outta Texas. Yeah, it's true. We really want to beat Texas, but that's not why Aggies come to Bonfire. Aggies come to Bonfire because they are proud to be Aggies."*

**TIM DUFFY**  
*FIGHTIN' TEXAS AGGIE*  
*CLASS OF 1998*



(above) The 12th Man welcomes junior QB Jarrod Johnson and the A&M football team back home at the Bright Complex around 11 a.m. following the Aggies' blowout victory over Texas Tech in Lubbock. (below left) President Barack Obama speaks about community service at Rudder Auditorium on the Texas A&M campus with Former President George Bush (#41) and Defense Secretary Robert Gates. (below right) Revellie VIII leads the Aggie football team on to Kyle Field for the Iowa State game. (bottom left) It was Billy Pildard Day at Kyle Field for the Oklahoma State game honoring his more than 50 years of service to Texas A&M athletics. (bottom right) An all-time record crowd of 3,856 fans were on hand as the volleyball team took on the Longhorns. (facing page) Aggie cheerleader (top and bottom) entertains the crowd at Maroon Madness. Kyle Field while soccer fans (middle) yell for the Aggies against Texas Tech.







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**In 10 years I'll likely be** still dancing hopefully and probably traveling

**Why I love A&M:** Mostly the traditions and the family feeling. It is a fun, positive atmosphere.

**Favorite tradition:** The yells we do at the basketball games. Like "Sit Down Bus Driver" are my favorite tradition. No one else has our yells. That is why I love them.

**Favorite part about traveling:** Getting to experience the postseason along with the team.

**Movies I can't live without:** Anything with Adam Sandler or Will Ferrell.

**Music I can't live without:** Hinder and Lil Wayne. He is pretty legit.

**Worst job I have had:** When I was in high school, I needed some extra money because broke a camera. I worked at the zoo, thinking I would get to work with the animals. Instead, they made me clean up the cages. Fortunately, it was only a couple of months in the summer.

**I came to Texas A&M because** of the traditions and the prestige of the school. I came and I just fell in love with it.

**When I was little, I wanted to be** a vet. Not so much anymore, but I guess it could still happen.

**The best part about being on the dance team is** dancing with your best friends.

**Talent I would most like to have:** I would like to learn to play the piano and the guitar. I can already play the drums. Maybe sing. I could be a "one-man band!" I could be like Lil Wayne.

**Besides the Aggies, my favorite sports team is** the Dallas Mavericks.

**I like to spend my weekends** hanging out with friends and dancing.

**Dream date:** Somewhere spontaneous but fun.

**Attribute you like the best about yourself:** I'm always in a good mood.

**Attribute you like the least about yourself:** I can't be taken too seriously. I'm always joking around.

**If I had more time I would** be an NBA dancer, go to college and travel. All rolled into one.


**Favorite food:** Italian pasta.

**Five people I would like to have dinner with:** Chelsea Handler, Will Ferrell, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie and their kids.

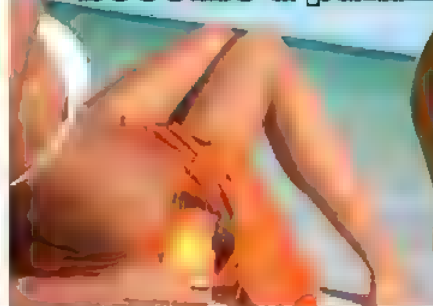
**Pet peeve:** When people are negative.

**If I could have a superpower, it would be to** fight like Elektra in the movie Daredevil.

**If I won the lottery, the first thing I'd buy** is an amazing house for my parents and all the toys at Toys"R"Us for my little sister. I don't get her enough toys.

**Odds of having the Dance Team at football games:** Last year we tried to get a signing going on to see if people would approve of it or vote for it. We got a lot of people who were interested in it and excited about it, but I don't think it was approved by the athletic department. But, you never know. I think it would be a lot of fun just to have some pep going on the sideline. 

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# back home IN AGGIELAND

BY KATHY MCCOY



but my memories of Silver Taps still bring tears to my eyes."

Being one of the leading cardiothoracic surgeons in the Bryan/College Station area, you might be surprised to learn that Dr. Andrew Hansen '71 didn't always aspire to become a doctor. It wasn't until after his high school biology class that Hansen even considered the medical field.

"I wanted to follow in my dad's footsteps and be an engineer," he admits, "but he saw my interest in biology and suggested that I become a 'body engineer.'"

The Port Arthur, TX, native had opportunities to attend several prestigious universities out of high school including Rice, Cal Tech and even MIT, but for Hansen, the decision was easy.

"My father was class of '42 and a member of the Corps of Cadets and Ross Volunteers, but he never pushed me to go to A&M," Hansen said admirably.

Even without any pressure from his father, Hansen realized that A&M was "where he fit in."

And that's just what he did. Like his father before him, Hansen was a member of the Corps and Ross Volunteers while at A&M.

"Some of my very best friends were in that group," he said.

Hansen's first medical experience started when he worked between college semesters at a Port Arthur hospital as a scrub tech.

"I met a lot of surgeons and I realized that was what I wanted to do," he said.

After graduating from Texas A&M in 1971, he moved to Lubbock to attend medical school. Even though he was hundreds of miles away, Hansen enjoyed keeping up on the latest events in Aggeland.

Further deepening his connection with A&M, Hansen served as president of the Association of Former Students. He spent nearly every weekend in Aggeland during that time.

Through his work, Hansen and the class of '55 donated a fountain by the Association building. The fountain isn't just a nice attribute to the architecture of the building—it's also where Hansen proposed to his wife and they were married in the Center.

Hansen and his wife, Kathy, both thrive on the Aggie spirit. Though she graduated from Texas Tech, he proudly explains that she's become a spirited Ag.

"The thing she enjoys most about A&M is the consistency with the yells and knowing what to expect," he admits.

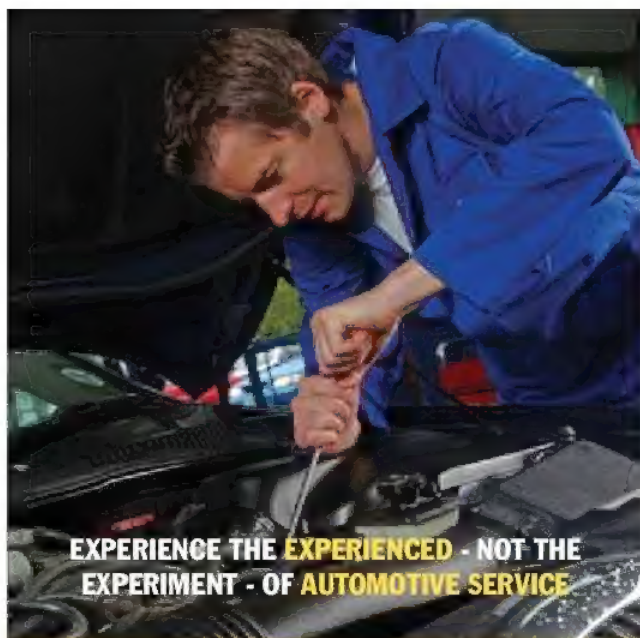
It was Kathy who finally convinced Hansen to move his practice from Lubbock to Aggeland. To them, College Station provided the perfect environment for raising a family. Shortly after his visit in 2007, they made Aggeland their home.

Currently, Dr. Hansen practices both cardiothoracic and vascular surgery. Although most surgeons don't like to do varicose vein surgery because of its nature, Hansen meets the challenge with a fresh perspective. Now, what used to be a complex, risky surgery can be done in his office.

"It's really neat to have been a part of an old technology that made surgeons dislike the operation and to now be a part of a new, well-developed one," he admits.

Now, Hansen is right at home in Aggeland with tickets to as many A&M sporting events as he can attend—home or away and a close connection to the university he loves. ■





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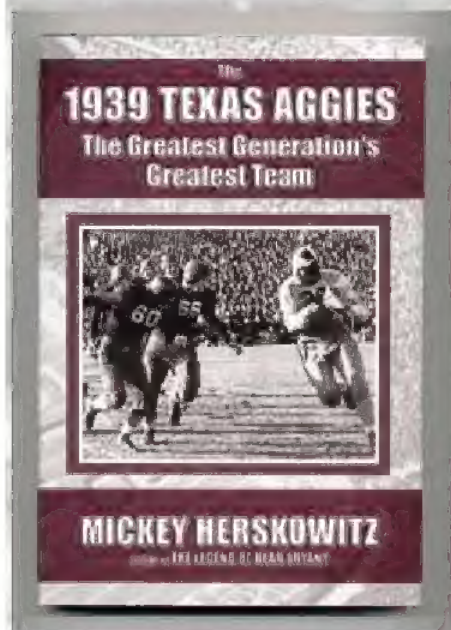


Midnight Yell Practice, November 25, 1999

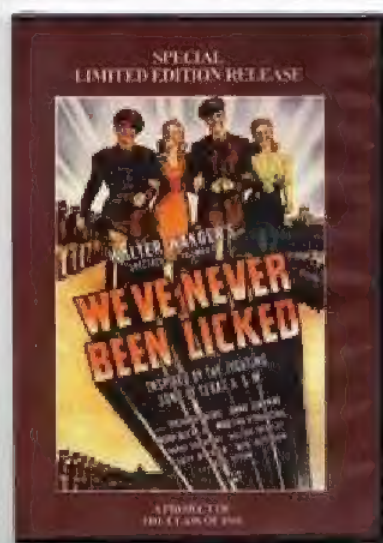




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